

NCAA Taking a Second Look at North Carolina After Bathroom Law Appeal

The National Collegiate Athletic Association said on Tuesday it will again consider allowing North Carolina to host championship games after the state replaced a law it deemed discriminatory against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

The NCAA had stripped North Carolina of championship events to protest the law, which required transgender people to use bathrooms matching the sex on their birth certificate rather than their gender identity and limited protection against discrimination of LGBT people.

Last week, state legislators in Raleigh passed a new law that repealed the bathroom measure. But they also banned cities from enacting their own anti-discrimination protections for LGBT people until 2020 and permanently blocked local legal protections for transgender people in restrooms.

The NCAA said those restrictions concerned its board of governors, who had preferred a full repeal of the year-old law known as House Bill 2.

A majority of the board “reluctantly” voted to permit the state to be considered for championship games in light of the new measure, the NCAA said.

“This new law has minimally achieved a situation where we believe NCAA championships may be conducted in a nondiscriminatory environment,” the governing body for U.S. college athletics said in a statement.

The announcement came hours after the North Carolina Tar

Heels' men's basketball team clinched the national title Monday night. Coach Roy Williams had opposed HB 2, which prompted the NCAA to move two rounds of the Division I men's tournament out of hoops-crazed North Carolina.

Critics of the new law, signed by Democratic Governor Roy Cooper after being approved by the Republican-controlled legislature on Thursday, called the NCAA's announcement disappointing.

They argue the state is continuing to discriminate against LGBT people with a measure they have dubbed "HB2.0."

"After drawing a line in the sand and calling for repeal of HB 2, the NCAA simply let North Carolina lawmakers off the hook," Human Rights Campaign President Chad Griffin said in a statement.

The Atlantic Coast Conference, another major collegiate athletic league, also has restored North Carolina's eligibility to host championship sporting events.

Cooper and top Republican lawmakers, Senate Leader Phil Berger and House of Representatives Speaker Tim Moore, said in statements they were pleased by the NCAA's move.

After a year of boycotts by corporations, conventions and concerts, elected officials said the revised measure addressed discrimination concerns while still protecting safety and privacy in government restrooms. {eoa}

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